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OUR MISSION AMONG THE
HOPI INDIANS OF NORTH AMERICA

by
Mabel Suderman

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Our mission among the Hopi
Indians of North America

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David Habegger



The newly enlarged Oraibi Mission Chapel
with a summer Bible school group in the
foreground.

Our Mission Among the -topi Indians of Northern Arizona

By
Mrs. John P. Suderman

Mabel

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THE AMERICAN RECEPTION COMMITTEE

On the streets of Oakland, California a policeman one day noticed a white man raise his fist into the face of a Hopi Indian. Recognizing the Indian he questioned the white man concerning his attitude. To which the white man answered, "This scoundrel has no business in our country." The policeman asked him, "And do you?" "O yes," said he, "my forefathers came over in the Mayflower." "And," said the policeman, "this man's forefathers were in the reception committee."

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There are in our country 203 Indian tribes, totaling approximately 350,000 Indians. 200,000 of these live on reservations, some live in villages and others live a nomadic life. The American Indian is not a decreasing race nor a fast dying race, but he is multiplying in number.

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The Hopi Indian tribe numbers only about 3,000. He lives on the Mesas of the Northern Arizona Desert. He lives in six main villages far removed from any town or railroad station. One may drive out from Winslow on highway No. 66 for 11 miles and then turn off onto a winding desert dirt road. In the

whole distance of 67 miles one passes only one group of buildings near a desert trading post. One sees an occasional Navajo Indian hogan in the distance, but no white man's dwelling of any kind. One may travel those long desert stretches for hours and meet only a few cars—maybe none at all. Except for a flock of sheep crossing the road here or there, or for the occasional flight of an eagle, one may drive along undisturbed in one's observation of the ever-changing desert scenes and hues of color: as mountains recede and others approach, or become enrapt in such gorgeous sunsets as only a desert sky will permit God's hand to paint before the human eye.

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A Hopi village, though built on high and prominent mountains, usually comes into view rather abruptly because their flat-roofed houses are built of native rock and adobe. Someone has recently said that a Hopi village is a sample of excellent camouflaging. As one enters a village one smells the scent of burning cedar wood from the old-fashioned four-hole kitchen range to the more modern granite range. One may see the women carrying water from the village spring, chopping wood, winnowing some freshly shelled corn; or one may hear the dull sound of corn being ground on flat inclined grinding stones, or the dull tapping of some woman pitting a hard stone, preparing it for

a grinding stone. Children may be seen playing near their homes, some girls holding baby sister or brother snugly against their left shoulders with the famous Indian shawl, or standing in groups around an iron kettle in which a girl is parching some red corn. The men may be out in their fields all day



Puhumana's home in the Mesa village. Since the burning of the Mesa chapel she has turned her house over to the Mission on Sunday afternoon for the Mesa S. S. and also for the women's sewing class during the week and for children's Bible school in summer.

and at even-tide come home on horse-back or in their light lumber wagons drawn by their ponies. The ponies are then watered at the village spring, a feed-bag with a little corn fastened to their necks and later their front legs hobbled and then turned out onto the free range for the night.

The Hopi Indian, though not one of the five civilized tribes, is considered one of the most industrious Indians. Living in the desert wastes where he gets only from two to seven inches of rainfall a year, he needs to be very persistently, patiently, and unflinching-



A Hopi Christian Indian mother weaving a basket. The weaving materials are gathered from desert brushes, scraped with a paring knife, dyed with native and commercial dyes, then woven into plaques and baskets. It is a long and tedious job. It gives them a means of trading for some lard, baking powder, or flour.

ly at his patches of corn, beans and melons; his peach and apple trees; or his herd of cattle or flock of sheep—spending days from five to ten miles away from the village. How he raises as much as he does, and how he is

able to manage to live on the little he does harvest, is a constant marvel to the white man.

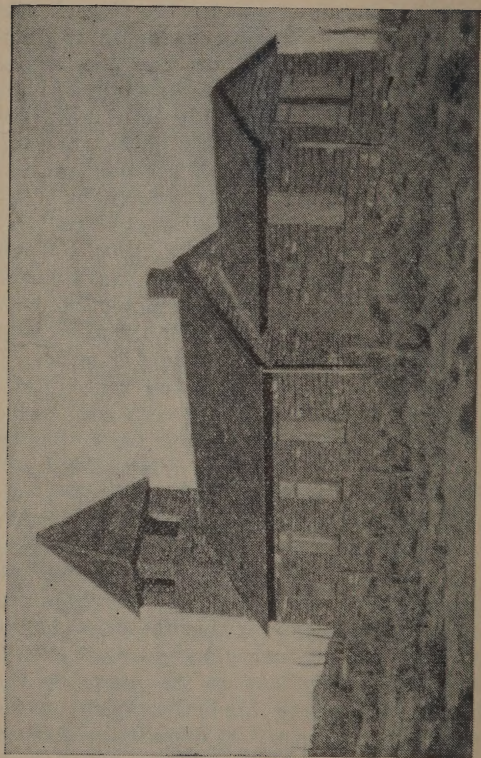
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Our government provides the Hopi Indian with elementary education locally, and with secondary and vocational education in non-reservation schools. During the "New Deal" administration the government is operating a local high school at Oraibi. High school students are brought in from the villages in busses. There are well-equipped dormitories and teachers' quarters. The school-rooms are ample in size and modern in equipment. From 60 to 70% of our Hopis can converse in the English language.

Our government also provides him with free medical care and hospitalization, having a hospital at either end of the reservation for both Hopi and Navajo Indians. Tuberculosis is very prevalent among them and for these the government has built a fine sanatorium in Winslow.

The government does not hand out monthly allotments of money to our Hopi Indian for he has never been moved from his original home. He never had anything the white man desired! At present the Navajo Indian is fast closing in on him from every side. This, together with the drastic stock reduction program of our government, causes him much distress and tends to embitter him anew towards the white man.

Though so industrious, yet the Hopi Indian is known to be one of the most reluctant of all Indians to accept the Gospel. The religion of the Hopi is decidedly heathen and Satanic. He worships creation rather than the Creator, and he bows down to idols of wood and stone not only to appease the gods but also to gain their favor for rain. His weird and fantastic ceremonies and dances are internationally known and encouraged. Before the days of tire and gasoline rationing as many as 2,000 tourists would come to witness a single snake dance. National officers are often among the witnesses. One year a Prussian Princess was one such tourist. And though they weary themselves in their rituals and very unselfishly grind their precious corn and serve hominy, piki, someviki, etc., freely during their dances—yet it leaves them empty and without peace of heart. Rather does it ensnare and entangle them deeper and firmer in Satan's lap and power. They are afraid of death. The heathen funeral wails are pitiful. Funerals take place as soon as possible after death enters. Believing that the spirit of the departed lingers near the grave for four days, they carry food to the grave on the fourth morning to feed the spirit on his journey. The funerals of departed saints are a great contrast to this. Those left behind will sob, then sing a phrase or verse, then sob and sing again. Not sorrowing as those that have no hope but looking beyond the



The Old Mesa Chapel built in 1901

grave unto the blessed coming of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ in the clouds of heaven at which time He shall also catch up all the living Christians to meet Him in the air and thus be with Him forevermore.



Two Protestant denominations are preaching the Gospel of Jesus Christ among the Hopi Indians. The Baptist missionaries take care of the three eastern villages and the Mennonite missionaries of the three western villages. The Mennonite Mission stations are Oraibi, Hotevilla, and Moencopi. Mr. and Mrs. Waldo Harder are, during our furlough, laboring at Oraibi, a village of 500 people. We have an active church membership of forty Christians. Mr. and Mrs. Daniel Schirmer, native Hopi Indians, are preaching at Hotevilla, a village of about 700. We have one active Christian there. In Moencopi, a village of 450, we have the native workers, Rev. and Mrs. Fred Johnson. There, too, we have one active Christian.

Our conference has a church building at each station. Sunday-school and preaching service, street-meetings, mid-week prayer-meetings, summer Bible Schools, and special evangelistic fall meetings are continued at each mission. The Hopi Christians sing well, learn new songs and choruses readily, love the deep things of God's Word, pray freely in prayer meetings, and are concerned about the salvation of their own people.

During the first two weeks of August the Southwest Bible and Missionary Conference convenes near Flagstaff, Arizona, amidst the lofty pine trees of the mountains. This is 100 miles from Oraibi. It is an interdenominational conference made possible by gifts from God's people who are interested




The girls in the home take care of the baby sister or brother a good deal of the time, usually carrying them in their shawls over the left shoulder. Ethel Jenkins is holding John Mark Suderman. Ethel is now a graduate nurse from the Ganado hospital and is at present a lieutenant nurse in the Army, stationed somewhere in England.

in the preaching of the Gospel among the Indians of the southwest. Here the missionaries from all over our southwestern states gather, bringing with them native Christians and workers from their respective tribes. There are cottages for the Indians on the grounds, while most missionaries have their

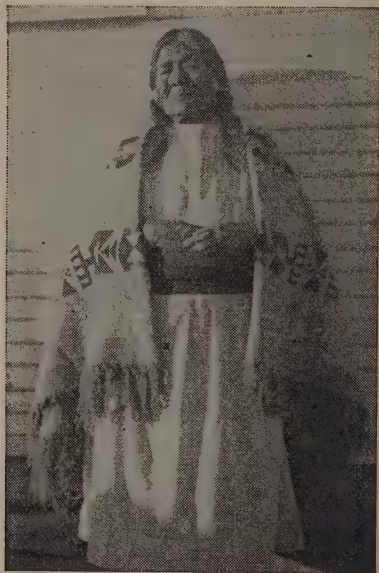
own little cottage. The conference owns a number of cottages for speakers and guests. The tabernacle and junior church are well attended during services. The women's and men's sunrise prayer-meetings are deeply inspiring, for Indian Christians join their missionaries in prayer for the conference and for unsaved Indians left behind on their respective reservations. Spontaneous chorus group singing during meals in the spacious dining hall is uplifting.

In the forenoon the sectional Bible classes meet in various buildings and under scattered pine trees, and later all gather in the meeting houses for a Bible lecture. The afternoons are devoted to Bible studies for the Indian Christians. The evenings are devoted to evangelistic meetings with such great Bible teachers as Dr. Ironside, Dr. Rood, Dr. Talbot, and others. Both missionaries and native Christians are greatly blessed, encouraged, and strengthened to go back to their respective places of preaching. This conference has been and is a great power for our Mennonite Mission and has done much to encourage in sound Gospel preaching.



Do missions among the Hopi Indians pay? If one soul is worth more than all the riches of this world combined, then just a few citations out of many possible ones, will suffice. Mary Honaptsi, an old Hopi woman, lived

in the heathen religion till in her eighties when, through her Christian daughter's constant witness she became interested in the Gospel message. One day she recognized herself as a sinner and received Jesus Christ as her personal Saviour. Her baptismal ser-



Mary Honaptsi

vice took place on a Sunday evening. Though ordinarily quite timid, yet she wove a testimony around each answer to the questions prior to baptism. Upon reaching home she

looked around and asked, "Where are the others that came home with us?" The family answered, "We are all here. Nobody came with us." "O yes," she said, "I saw three people all dressed in white come with us. One walked to my right, one to my left and one followed us." They agreed that the Lord must have opened her eyes to see the accompanying angels. This led to much rejoicing that God thus manifested His approval upon this old grandmother's confession. She lived but a few years longer. On the morning of her departure she had eaten a bit of breakfast. Then resting on her sheep-skin floor bed she was seen gazing up—then lifting her hand she pointed up saying, "King Jesus, I see King Jesus. Now I believe everything." Then closing her eyes she went to be with Him.

Or, when in pioneer days a missionary picked up a little baby boy who might have been buried alive with his mother, and raised him so that today he is a native Gospel Messenger, we must answer quickly, "Yes, it pays in precious returns." Also when in the summer Bible school of 1944 six souls accepted Jesus Christ as their personal Saviour one finds the privations, trials and testings melting away into nothing.



But what profit is it to a church if it sends out its members to preach to heathen people, and gives again and again? It seems like a

constant outpouring. Is it not said, though, that Christianity is something the more of which we export the more we have at home? And is it not also said that a church which does not send out missionaries is dead? The Lord never remains a debtor to any one nor to any church, but He blesses and rewards abundantly.



The Mission Home at Oraibi

And though there were none who would heed the Gospel among a foreign people, and though a church did not receive back as much or more as it sends and gives, yet the bare command of our Lord Jesus Christ "Go ye into all the world and preach the Gospel" should move us to keep on sending. Our love to Jesus and our adoration of Him should move us in our hearts and souls to desire to go. And His great compassion for

he eternally lost peoples of this world should stir us to preach to them Jesus in Whom alone there is eternal life and salvation from sin, the power of sin and from eternal damnation.

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The need of the hour is great. With over 3,000 of our Indian young men in the armed forces, and over 42,000 of the working group employed in war industries, our spiritual debt to this scattering race is becoming heavier. From 25 to 30 per cent have already left the reservations and have moved into cities and into powder dump areas. Many of them take their whole families into congested places and into the worst of communities. Those thus employed earn more money than ever before. This in itself tempts the majority of them into gambling dens and liquor joints, dragging them into the worst of vice and sin. Many a home and field is left behind unoccupied and uncared for and in the end the whole affair leaves him poorer than ever. His family life is cast to the winds and who is there that saith "restore"? Is. 42:22. Those left in the villages or camps on the reservation are the old and feeble, and a few choice families who realize that to leave their humble homes and their bare existence is too great a price to pay for a life that follows life in a city with high wages. How one desires that at least all Christians would really stop to prayer-

fully consider and weigh the irreparable loss in following after money.



If you might today be taken by the missionary into our villages and would knock at this door and that door one would hear the voice inside, "Pakii" (Come in). As one enters and shakes hands they offer one a sheep skin, a low box, or even a chair to sit on. They discontinue their work and sit down with us and wait for the missionary to begin the "story" for they know that the missionary has come to preach to them and they expect it of him. Can we fail them? Dare we fail our blessed Lord Jesus in forgetting to pray for them?

"So thou, O son of man, I have made thee a watchman" Ez. 33:7-9.

"Watchman, what of the night?" Is. 21:11

